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ABSTRACT

This booklet is part of a series of seven booklets designed to introduce aspects of effective reading instruction that should be considered when teaching reading to students with disabilities. It focuses on essential skill building and teaching activities related to developing a child's phonological awareness. The methods described of teaching reading to students with disabilities have been shown to be particularly effective. Some of these methods are used in regular education classrooms for students who are just learning to read, but they are appropriate for students with disabilities of any age who have not learned to read well. An introduction discusses general principles for teaching reading to students with disabilities and emphasizes the importance of individually designing a program based on a student's strengths and needs, parent involvement, and academic modifications. The information is organized into the following sections: what phonological awareness is, why it is important, what parents can do, what teachers can do, information for second language learners, and resources. Strategies include reading to the child, teaching rhymes and songs, playing word games, having the child clap for each word or syllable, and teaching students the sounds of letters. (Contains 13 references.) (CR)

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PEER Literacy Resource Brief #1

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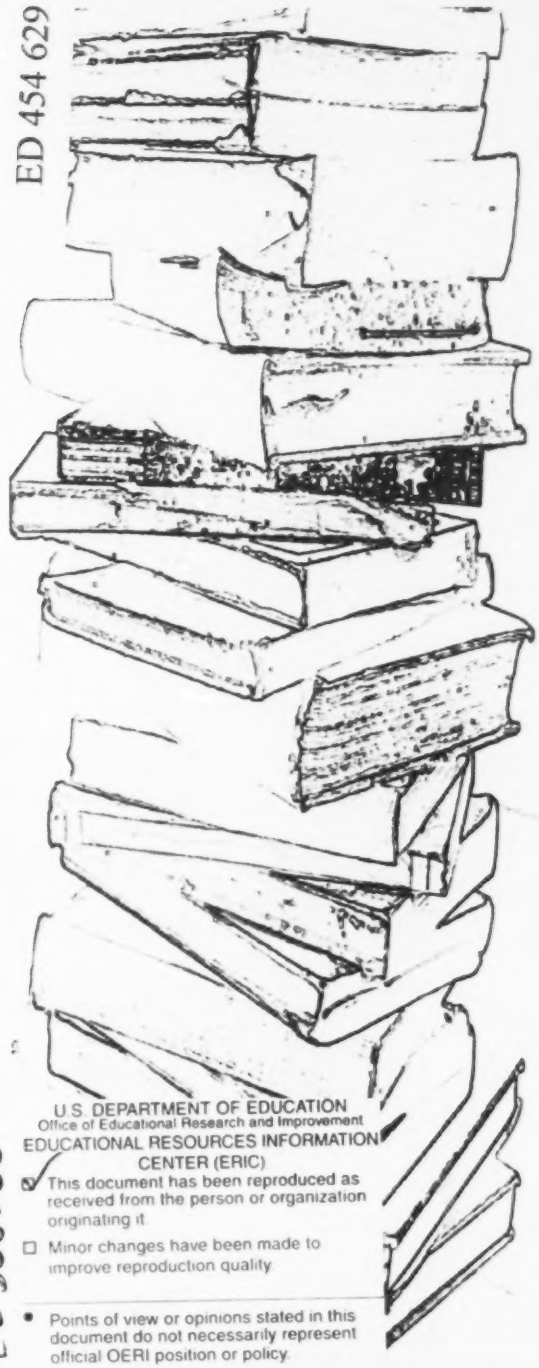

"Phonological Awareness"

from

Teaching Students with Disabilities to Read

by Carolyn A. Denton
Jan E. Hasbrouck
Texas A&M University

Prepared by
the PEER Project
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PEER is a project of
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EC 308366

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Carolyn A. Denton and Jan E. Hasbrouck
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September 2000

Prepared by the PEER Project
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the Federation for Children with Special Needs
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Parents Engaged in Education Reform (PEER) is a national technical assistance project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. PEER's purpose is to support parents of children with disabilities and their organizations to be informed, active participants in education reform efforts. In addition, to enhance opportunities for early literacy in reading for at-risk students, PEER is providing information and training to parent and community organizations in promising and best practices in literacy.

The Federation for Children with Special Needs is a nonprofit organization based on the philosophy of parents helping parents. Founded in 1974 as a coalition of twelve disability and parent organizations, today the Federation is an independent advocacy organization committed to quality education and health care for all, and to protecting the rights of all children. To this end, the Federation provides information, support, and assistance to parents of children with disabilities, their organizations, their professional partners, and their communities.

For more information about the PEER Project or the Federation for Children with Special Needs, please contact the Federation's Central Office at:

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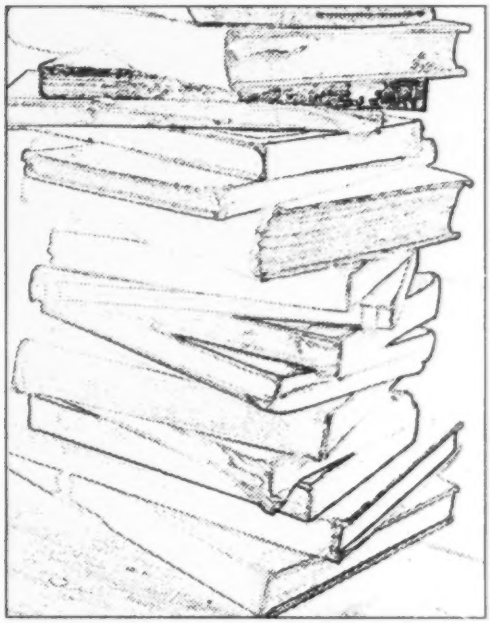
Phonological Awareness



Phonological Awareness is the first of a seven-part series of Resource Briefs that comprises *Teaching Students with Disabilities to Read: A PEER Resource Booklet.* Titles of Resource Briefs in this series of PEER Literacy Resource Briefs include:

Brief #1: Phonological Awareness

Brief #2: Systematic Phonics Instruction

Brief #3: Word Identification

Brief #4: Supported Passage Reading

Brief #5: Fluent Reading

Brief #6: Reading Comprehension

Brief #7: Early Intervention in Reading

Phonological Awareness is organized into these sections:

- General principles to keep in mind
- What is phonological awareness?
- Why is it important?
- What can parents do?
- What can teachers do?
- Note for second language learners
- Conclusion
- Resources
- References

General principles to keep in mind

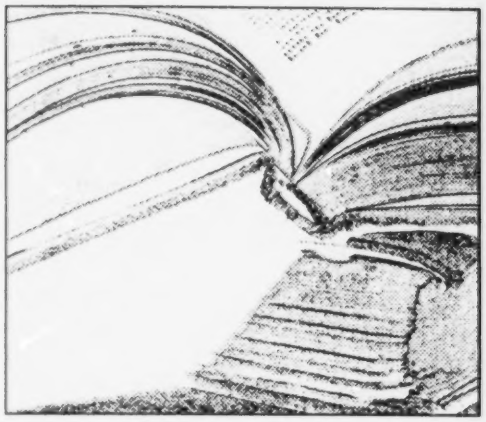
Reading is very important for success in our society, yet as many as one in five students has difficulty learning to read. Most students with learning disabilities, and many students with other types of disabilities, have problems in the areas of reading, writing, and spelling. This **Literacy Resource Brief** introduces parents and teachers to essential skill-building and teaching activities related to developing a child's phonological awareness. Methods of teaching reading to students with disabilities described here have been shown to be particularly effective. Some of these methods are used in regular education classrooms for students who are just learning to read (Kindergarten through Grade 2), but they are still relevant and useful for students with disabilities of any age who have not learned to read well. Instructional materials should be selected with an eye toward age appropriateness.

The following key issues in reading instruction for students with disabilities are important regardless of the age or ability level of a student.

- Students with all types of disabilities have the *right* to quality reading instruction, whether they are in elementary, middle, or high school. Parents have the *right* to insist that the school provide instruction designed to help their children with disabilities improve their reading skills. These issues should be addressed in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

- Reading programs for students with disabilities should be individually designed based on a student's strengths and needs. Parents and teachers should not make judgments about a student's ability to learn, or about the best way to teach him or her, based solely on a student's disabling condition or label. Every individual student's abilities, needs, and life situation must be carefully evaluated and considered in the IEP in order to design the best reading program for that student.

- Many students with disabilities may need modifications (changes) in the way they receive instruction, and in the way they fulfill class requirements in order to succeed in areas such as science, social studies, and language arts. These modifications are very important, but *they should not take the place of instruction* designed to help students with disabilities improve their reading skills.



Students with all types of disabilities have the *right* to quality reading instruction, whether they are in elementary, middle, or high school.

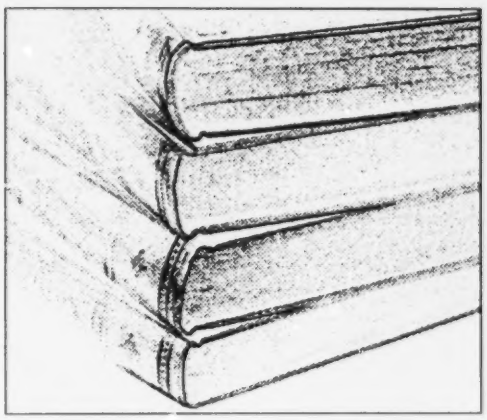
- Parents should, first and always, communicate with their child's teacher(s). Parents can simply ask their child's teacher(s) what can be done to help the child at home. Parents should also recognize themselves and be recognized as important sources of information about their child's interests, abilities, and learning styles. Coordination of school and home efforts is one of the best ways to help a student succeed. Strategies to ensure communication and coordination between school and home can be addressed in the student's IEP.

- The reading material used in reading instruction has to be "not too hard, not too easy," but at the right level for a student. Actual reading of real stories or other material should be part of a student's reading program.

- In the past, some people believed that certain methods of teaching reading were best for students with certain disabilities: that some methods were best for students with brain injury, that others were better for students with learning disabilities, and that still other methods were best for students with mental retardation. This is not the case. The success of a method of teaching reading depends on the content of the program, the way it is taught, the intensity of the instruction (how often and how actively it is taught), and the needs and strengths of the individual student.

- Although different methods of teaching reading may work equally well with students having various disabilities, students benefit when instruction is systematic and structured. Reading skills should be introduced in careful order, and students must be given a great deal of practice and repetition in each skill, so that they master each skill before new ones are introduced.

- **Note for second language learners:** Students who come to school unable to speak English should first be taught



to read in their *native language*. Later, as they gain proficiency in spoken English, they should be taught to extend these skills to reading in English. This practice, however, is not possible in all school situations. Instructional materials may not be available in the child's native language, or there may not be a teacher who can speak and read in the child's native language. If students cannot speak English, and they cannot be taught to read in their native language, they should be given time to develop their proficiency in spoken English before they begin reading instruction. They need to learn English speech sounds and vocabulary. English reading instruction should begin *after* the student can speak English well enough to benefit from instruction.

Reference

Snow, C.E., Burns, M.S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.) (1998). *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children.* Washington D.C.: National Academy Press.

What is phonological awareness?

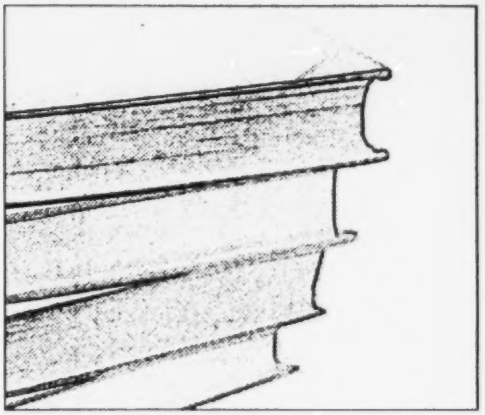
Phonological awareness is the ability to hear separate words, syllables, and sounds in speech. This awareness allows a student to separate spoken words into their sounds and put sounds together to make words. Phonological awareness is not reading; it is sensitivity to sounds in speech. It is the ability to "play with" spoken words and sounds. Another term often used in the same way is "phonemic awareness."

A person with good phonological awareness can:

1. give words that rhyme with other words,
2. clap the syllables in a word,
3. take words apart and say or identify the first sound in a word separately from the rest of the word (example: say "p-art, part"),
4. say or indicate all the sounds of a word separately (example: say "c-a-t, cat"),
5. blend sounds together to make words (like sounding out words),
6. take a sound off of a word: (example: Say "meat" without the "m": "eat"),
7. group words together that start with the same sound, or end with the same sound (example: snake, sad, sack; or rat, great, set), and change words in other ways.

Why is it important?

Research has shown that there is a



powerful connection between the ability to *hear* and play with sounds in words and the ability to read and understand written words. It has been shown that students with good phonological awareness skills are more likely to learn to read well. Many students have disabilities which impact the ability to read. These students frequently exhibit poor phonological awareness as a result of their disability. The good news is that these skills can be learned. Students of all ages can be taught to improve their phonological awareness skills.

What can parents do?

- Ask your child's teachers whether they have tested your child's phonological awareness. Ask whether they are providing a reading program that includes phonological awareness training.

- Read to your child. Try to find books with rhyming words and word plays. Talk about the words that rhyme. A list of good books is in an article by

Yopp (p. 217) in the book *Teaching Struggling Readers.* (See References, below).

- Teach your child poems, nursery rhymes, and/or songs. Talk about the words in the songs that rhyme.

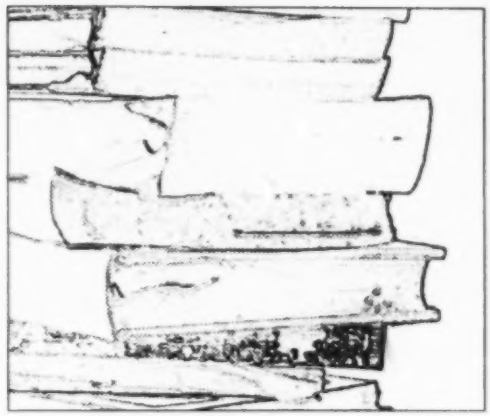
- Play "word games" with your child. For example, try to say a list of words that rhyme with each other. (What rhymes with cat?: cat, hat, mat…). Use children's names to create lists of rhyming words, both real and "made-up." (Mark, shark, dark, lark, yark, zark). Or, say a list of rhyming words, but include one word that does not rhyme. Have your child pick out the one that does not rhyme.

- Have your child clap for each word in a sentence, or take a step for each word. Clap for each word in a nursery rhyme or poem. (Purpose: to hear and identify words within a sentence).

- Have your child clap the syllables in words. A good place to start is to have them clap their names, and the names of friends and relatives. (John has one clap, Mary has two claps, and Maria has three claps.) (Purpose: to hear the parts of words.)

What can teachers do?

Teachers can assess (test) students to find out whether they need phonological awareness training. Some tests are listed in the Resources section below.



Phonological awareness is not reading; it is sensitivity to sounds in speech. It is the ability to "play with" spoken words and sounds.

Teachers can include phonological awareness training in a student's reading program if they need it. They can include any of the activities listed above in "What can parents do?" Many published reading programs include phonological awareness training, and teachers can include additional activities for this purpose. (See Resources.) The following activities are very important to include in reading programs for students at risk and for students whose disabilities may impact their ability to read:

- Teach students the sounds of letters. Have students blend sounds together to make words.

- "Rubber-band" words: Say words in a smooth, slow, stretched-out way and have students identify the word you are saying.

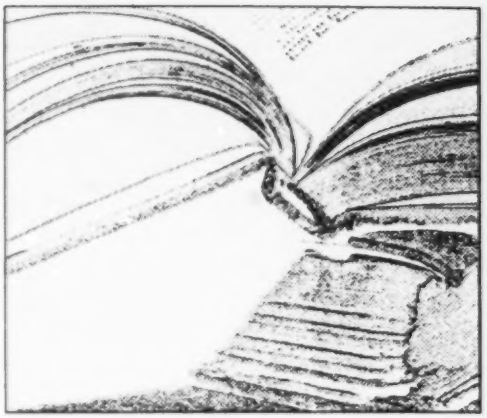
- Say words one sound at a time and have students put the sounds together and tell you the words.

Note for second language learners

There is a question as to whether or not students who are limited in English proficiency can use phonological awareness and phonemic awareness tests. These students may not be able to understand the directions, and speech sounds that are common in English may not exist in the child's native language. We do not know of a test of phonological awareness in Spanish, although some researchers are working to develop this type of test.

Conclusion

With proper instruction and support, many more students than previously thought capable of reading can learn to read. Reading can open the door to success, enabling students to live fuller, more independent lives and to succeed in a variety of careers. This **PEER Literacy Resource Brief** has outlined areas of critical concern in reading education for students with disabilities. When parents and teachers have access to the information they need, they are better equipped to make decisions about students' educational programs.



Resources

NOTE: These resources may be helpful to teachers and parents. They are listed here merely as options. The authors of this paper do not recommend any particular program, materials, or test.

Tests of Phonological Awareness

The Auditory Analysis Test, by Rosner & Simon, described in: Rosner, J., & Simon, D.P. (1971). The Auditory Analysis Test: An Initial Report. *Journal of Learning Disabilities,* 4 (7), pp. 41- 48. (May be used with students in Kindergarten through Grade 6.)

Lindamood Auditory Conceptualization Test, distributed by Pro-Ed, (800) 897-3202.

The Phonological Awareness Test, published by LinguiSystems, (800) 776-4332.

Test of Phonological Awareness, by Torgesen and Bryant, distributed by Pro-Ed, (800) 897-3202. (For younger children.)

Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing, by Wagner, Torgesen, and Rashotte, distributed by Pro-Ed, (800) 897-3202. (For kindergarten through college-age students.)

The Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation, described in: Yopp, H.K. (1995). A Test for Assessing Phonemic Awareness in Young Children. *The Reading Teacher,* 49 (1), pp. 20-29.

Reading Programs that Include Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

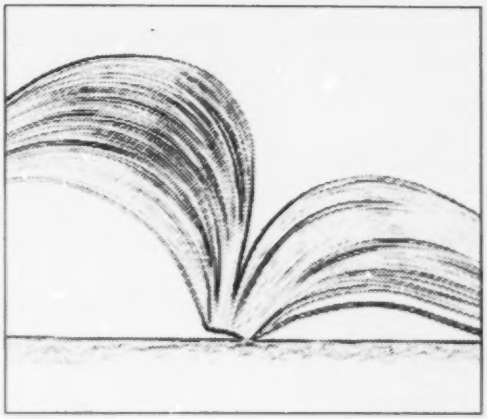
Open Court Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Kit, Open Court Publishing Co., 315 5th St., Peru, IL 61354, (800) 435-6850. Published by SRA, (800) 843-8855.

Read Well: Critical Foundations in Primary Reading, by Sprick, Howard, and Fidanque. Published by Sopris West, (800) 547-6747.

Saxon Phonics, Kindergarten level, (800) 284-7019.

Books and Special Programs with Phonological Awareness Activities

Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program for Reading, Spelling, and Speech (formerly Auditory Discrimination in Depth), published by Pro-Ed, (800) 897-3202.



Phonemic Awareness in Young Children: A Classroom Curriculum, by Marilyn J. Adams, Barbara Foorman, Ingvar Lundberg, and Terri Beeler, published in 1998 by Paul Brookes, PO Box 10624, Baltimore, MD 21285-0624, (410)-337-9580.

Phonemic Awareness: Playing with Sounds to Strengthen Beginning Reading Skills, published by Creative Teaching Press, (800) 287-8879.

The Phonological Awareness Kit and The Sounds Abound Program, published by LinguiSystems, (800) 776-4332.

Phonological Awareness Training for Reading, by Torgesen and Bryant, published by Pro-Ed, (800) 897-3202.

Sounds and Letters for Readers and Spellers, published by Sopris West, (800) 547-6747.

Companies that Sell Items for Use in Phonemic Awareness Training (Call for catalogs.)

LinguiSystems, (800) 776-4332.

Pro-Ed, (800) 897-3202.

The Reading Manipulatives Company, (888) 997-2448.

Teaching Resource Center, (800) 833-3389.

Resources for Reading, (800) ART-READ (278-7323).

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